

a new millennium. The arrival of the 21st century presents all Americans with an opportunity to reflect on where we have been as a Nation and to dream about where we will go in the future. At the dawn of this century, Orville and Wilbur Wright found themselves poised at such a moment. Behind them lay years of painstaking effort and experimentation, trial and failure, in their pursuit of the dream of powered human flight. Ahead of them stretched the sands of Kitty Hawk in North Carolina and yet another attempt to fly in the aircraft they had built by hand. On December 17, 1903, for 12 seconds and 120 feet, they achieved their dream and forever changed the destiny of humankind.

That first brief flight showed that the sky was no longer a limit but a new horizon; it ignited new dreams in our people. Each succeeding generation of Americans, building on the Wright brothers' achievement and fired by the same vision, energy, and determination, has refined the science of flight, increased the range, efficiency, and safety of aircraft, and created a modern air transportation system and aviation industry that have energized our economy and helped transform the world into a truly global community.

And, while they could never have foreseen it, the Wright brothers also brought us to the threshold of space. A scant six decades after that first flight, Americans left the Earth's atmosphere and orbited our planet. By 1969, Neil Armstrong had left the first human footprint on the dusty surface of the Moon. Today's astronauts fly space shuttle missions that are helping us meet the challenge of global climate change, bringing the International Space Station closer to completion, and expanding our knowledge of Earth and the universe. Yet even now the Wright brothers' achievement continues to fire our dreams and beckons us to make new discoveries.

The Congress, by a joint resolution approved December 17, 1963 (77 Stat. 402; 36 U.S.C. 169), has designated December 17 of each year as "Wright Brothers Day" and has authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation inviting the people of the United States to observe that day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

**Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton,**  
President of the United States of America,

do hereby proclaim December 17, 1999, as Wright Brothers Day.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of December, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

**William J. Clinton**

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NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on December 21.

### **Remarks on Signing the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999**

*December 17, 1999*

Thank you. Senator Kennedy, Senator Jeffords, we thank you for your leadership and your remarks today. And Senator Roth, we thank you very much. We know this couldn't have happened without you. And Senator Moynihan, Representative Lazio, thank you, sir. And Representative Waxman and Representative Brown who are here, and Representative Dingell who isn't here—I want to thank all of you for your leadership in the House. Give them all a hand. [*Applause*]

I also want to thank the members of the administration who were particularly active in supporting this bill: Secretary Herman, the cochair of my task force on the employment of adults with disabilities; Secretary Shalala; Secretary Summers; Social Security Commissioner Apfel. I'd like to thank, in the White House, my Chief of Staff John Podesta, Chris Jennings, and Jeanne Lambrew, who had a lot to do with this bill, as all of you know.

I want to thank Senator Dole, especially, and through him all the citizens who came forward and made it possible for this to be a genuinely American bill. I want to welcome the members of the Roosevelt family who are here today, particularly Jim and Ann Roosevelt, my longtime friends. And now Jim is a member of this administration, something I'm very proud of.

I want to thank you, Justin Dart, and the members of the disability community who are here, for this and every other issue that

we've worked on for over 7 years now. And I want to acknowledge—James Sullivan really spoke for three others who are here—Donna McNamee, Paul Marshall, and Wesley Vinner. I thank them for being up here, because every one of them represents a different, slightly different story of someone who will benefit from this bill, and I thank them for sharing their stories with us.

I think it's kind of interesting, don't you, that Mr. Sullivan, from New Hampshire and Senator Jeffords, from Vermont, are the only two people up here without coats on? *[Laughter]* This is a warm December day in New England. *[Laughter]*

Senator Jeffords, you made that remark that President Roosevelt never carried Vermont. You know, my family communes with the Roosevelts on a regular basis—*[laughter]*—you may remember that. And Eleanor told Hillary last night you're forgiven, all is forgiven now. *[Laughter]* This wipes the slate clean—this bill does. *[Laughter]*

John Sweeney, we thank you for being here. And we thank the labor community for their support of this legislation, as well.

I think it is wonderfully fitting that this is the last piece of legislation a President of the United States will sign in the entire 20th century. We do it at this magnificent memorial to Franklin Roosevelt, who from his wheelchair lifted our Nation out of depression and led the free world to victory in World War II, who laid the building blocks for world peace and security that we enjoy today, and accomplished it all as an American with a disability.

In his time, as we all know—and we've had a lot of debates about that in this memorial context—Roosevelt felt he needed to keep his wheelchair from public view. Most people believed being disabled meant being unable, though he proved them very wrong every day. Today, in the spirit of his leadership and the wake of his accomplishments, we move further along on our Nation's marvelous journey of equal opportunity for all.

This is a good time for our country. We're ending the century on a high note, with 20 million new jobs since 1993, the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the lowest welfare rolls in 32 years, the lowest poverty rate

in 20 years, in February, the longest economic expansion in our entire history. But in spite of this good economic news, we know that three out of four people with significant disabilities are not working. They're ready to work, they're willing to work, and they are very able to work. But as we have heard, they face the daunting barrier of losing their Medicare or Medicaid coverage if they get a job.

For many Americans with disabilities, medical bills, as you just heard from our previous speaker, may cost thousands more than what is typically covered by an employer's private health insurance. For some, including some on this stage, those medical bills, because of the attendant care services, may add up to more than any reasonable salary a person with disabilities could ever hope to earn.

And yet, quite beyond the human cost of denying people the dignity of work, this defies common sense and economic logic. It doesn't make sense for people to be denied the dignity of work and for the taxpayers to pay the bills, whether they're working or not, and therefore, losing the benefit of the productivity, the contributions to our economy and society, and as you just heard, the tax receipt of working Americans.

Secretary Summers is here. You wouldn't believe how much time we spend arguing over how much longer this economic expansion can go on. How can we keep it going without inflation? How many expansions in the past have been broken because inflation finally burst through and had to be taken down and that led to a recession?

Well, one way we can keep this economic expansion going is to take it to people and places who aren't part of it. That's what our new markets initiative to poor areas of America is all about. And make no mistake about it, that will be one big objective of this bill. This is an inflation-free way to keep America's economy growing. You are helping every single American—not just Americans with disabilities—every single American will be helped by this legislation today.

But of course, even more compelling than the economic argument is the human one. Today, we say with a simple but clear voice, no one should have to choose between taking a job and having health care.

This legislation reorients our policy by saying health care ought to be a tool to getting a job, earning a salary, paying taxes, and living up to one's God-given potential. You don't have to worry about losing Medicare or Medicaid anymore.

This landmark measure will also make a real difference to people who are facing the early onset of diseases like AIDS, muscular dystrophy, Parkinson's, or diabetes. Right now, they may be able to work, but their work conditions are not deemed severe enough to qualify for Medicare. In other words, they may only become eligible for health care when they're no longer able to work. Now the problem is they're uninsurable because of the condition they have, even though they're not disabled. So they're also in a different kind of double-bind.

With this bill—thanks again to bipartisan support in Congress and to the fact that the Senate Finance Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee found a way to fund it—we are going to have a \$250 million demonstration program that will allow these Americans to buy into the Medicare program, so they can stay on the job and don't have to give it up to get health care when they're perfectly capable of working. This is also a very important feature of this bill.

And finally, both Senator Kennedy and Senator Jeffords mentioned the Ticket to Work legislation that's a part of this bill. This creates long-overdue reforms of the job-training program, so people with disabilities can make their own choices about vocational rehabilitation services, the ones that are best for them.

Taken together, clearly, this is the most significant advancement for people with disabilities since the Americans with Disabilities Act almost a decade ago. It continues our administration's efforts to replace barriers to opportunity with policies based on inclusion, empowerment, and independence.

That's why we reformed welfare, to reward the dignity of work, why we doubled the earned-income tax credit for low-income working people, particularly those with children, raised the minimum wage, enacted the family and medical leave law. This bill takes us another huge step in the right direction of both liberating and rewarding the creative

energies of all Americans. But our task isn't done.

I often think it's ironic that, when we have these bill signings, the Presidents get to make the speeches and sign the bills, but the Members of Congress must be sitting out there thinking they did all the work. *[Laughter]* And in truth, they did the lion's share, and I was proud to support them.

But now it's our turn. We have to make it work in the lives of real people. I have instructed Secretary Shalala, Secretary Herman, and Commissioner Apfel to take immediate action to implement this legislation, to team up with the States advocates, businesses, and others who are crucial to make this bill work.

Now, all of you here who had a hand in this know that the way it's set up, States have a vital role to play. We want to take every opportunity to help every single State in America take maximum advantage of the new options provided under this legislation. We want to encourage employees to reach out and tap the talented pool of potential workers that are now available. We want to work with all of you to ensure that we effectively get the word out to people who have disabilities so they actually know about the benefits of this legislation.

This is about more than jobs or paychecks—I'll say it again—it's about more than keeping our recovery going. It's fundamentally about the dignity of each human being, about the realization of a quality of opportunity, about recognizing that work is at the heart of the American dream.

In the end, the counsel of Franklin Roosevelt that's etched in the walls of this memorial guides us still. He said, "No country, however rich, can afford the waste of its human resources." That is ever more true as we cross the threshold into the new millennium.

I think Mr. Roosevelt would be proud of all of you today. I think we have honored his life and his legacy. In the new century, America will realize even more of its promise because we have unleashed the promise of more Americans.

Congratulations, and God bless you all.

I'd like to ask the Members of Congress and the administration to come up for the bill signing now.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:55 a.m. at the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial. In his remarks, he referred to James Sullivan, Hudson, NH, who introduced the President, Donna McNamee, Cleveland, OH, Paul Marshall, Wheaton, MD, and Wesley Vinner, Riverdale, MD, citizens who will benefit from the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act; Representative Sherrod Brown; former Senator Bob Dole; Justin Dart, Jr., chairman and founder, Justice For All; Jeanne Lambrew, Senior Health Policy Analyst, National Economic Council; and John J. Sweeney, president, AFL-CIO. H.R. 1180, approved December 17, was assigned Public Law No. 106-170. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

### **United States-European Union Summit Statement on Chechnya** *December 17, 1999*

The United States and the European Union are deeply concerned about the situation in Chechnya. We recognize Russia's right to uphold its territorial integrity and to defend its citizens from terrorism and lawlessness, and we condemn terrorism in all its manifestations. But we believe that Russia's military tactics in Chechnya are undermining its objectives, creating a humanitarian crisis, endangering innocent civilians, and jeopardizing stability throughout the Caucasus region. A military solution to the conflict is not possible. We call for an immediate and lasting cease-fire throughout Chechnya and a political dialogue that can lead to a durable solution to the crisis.

The indiscriminate use of force against civilians is unacceptable. Providing for the safety of innocent civilians is a fundamental obligation of all states. We call on Russia to respect this principle unconditionally.

We stress that the respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of neighboring states is a fundamental principle of the international system. We are concerned by the impact of the Chechnya conflict on security throughout the Caucasus and stress the importance of avoiding steps that would further undermine regional security.

Displaced persons should be allowed full freedom of movement. Russian and regional

authorities must provide for their well being. The United States and the EU strongly support the courageous efforts of international relief organizations, including the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), to provide humanitarian assistance to displaced people and others affected by the conflict. We ask Russia to work constructively with these organizations and ensure security for their personnel and access for their operations.

The OSCE Istanbul Summit Declaration noted that the OSCE could contribute to finding a political solution to the conflict. We are encouraged that OSCE Chairman-in-Office Vollebaek was able to visit the North Caucasus. We support his efforts to promote a political dialogue as well as the continuing role of the OSCE in finding a lasting solution to the conflict. We believe that an office of the OSCE Assistance Group should be opened in neighboring Ingushetiya to monitor the humanitarian situation. We call on Russia to respect all of the commitments it has made in the framework of the OSCE. In that regard, we acknowledge Prime Minister Putin's statements that he has held talks with representatives of Chechen President Maskhadov and urge continuation of meaningful discussions with responsible Chechen leaders.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

### **United States-European Union Summit Statement on Southeast Europe** *December 17, 1999*

We reaffirm our commitment to the emergence of a secure, democratic and prosperous Southeastern Europe. We agree on the central importance of promoting democratic change in Yugoslavia and will remain engaged in enhancing the security of the region until that happens. We will therefore work together with Yugoslav democratic forces, including the Government of Montenegro, to promote such change. We support the efforts of the freely elected government of Montenegro to advance political and economic reform within the FRY. We will also